

**Frequently asked questions for Quality Assured Lifelong Learning on the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales for social care, early years and childcare in Wales.**

The Care Council for Wales has been leading on an exciting project that has been exploring the accreditation of quality assured lifelong learning in social care, early years and childcare, which will form part of the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales. The project has included a number of pilots across a wide range of services and the Care Council are now ready to open up the opportunity for others to engage in the accreditation of quality assured lifelong learning.

A guide for the accreditation of quality assured lifelong learning is available from our website, this provides basic information that will help you decide whether accreditation is for you. The FAQ sheet builds upon the guide and should help with any additional unanswered questions.

**Finding out about Quality Assured Lifelong Learning**

**What is the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)?**

The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) was introduced in Wales in 2003. It “*envisages embracing all types of learning within a common recognition framework”* and underpins five key goals:

* *“Enabling everyone to develop and maintain essential skills;*
* *Encouraging people to become lifelong learners;*
* *Supporting the development of skills in businesses and educational institutions;*
* *Encouraging workers to gain new skills; and*
* *Helping people within their communities to develop new skills.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

It brings all recognised learning into a single structure that includes higher education, lifelong learning and general and vocational education and training.

You can find more information about CQFW from: cqfwenquiries@wales.gsi.gov.uk

**What is quality assured lifelong learning?**

Lifelong learning covers the whole range of learning – formal, informal and workplace learning. It also includes the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that people acquire in their day to day experiences.

Quality assured lifelong learning is that which is assessed, measured, recorded and certificated i.e. accredited

**What does the “quality assured” part of the QALL title mean?**

This means that the learning is formally assessed and quality assured by an approved assessment centre through a recognised awarding organisation. The awarding organisation will need to have systems in place that ensure that the assessment judgements of learners are fair, consistent and reliable.

More information about awarding organisations can be found further on in this FAQ

**What is accredited learning on CQFW?**

The CQFW utilises three concepts:

* “*Expression of achievement as* ***learning outcomes****;*
* *The demands made by that learning on the learner referred to as* ***level****;*
* *Volume of learning achievements, referred to as* ***credit****.”2*

**Learning outcomes** are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process e.g.

“*1. Understand how to promote behaviour change in families.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Learning outcomes are supported by assessment criteria. These are the criteria used for judging whether the outcome has been achieved e.g.

“*1.1 Describe how to promote behaviour change in families to include:*

* *Using a whole family approach*
* *The process of change*
* *Exploring ambivalence.”3*

**Level** is an indicator of the relative demand, complexity, depth of learning and of learner autonomy – this is set out in agreed “*level descriptors’’* that are used across all the pillars in CQFW.

The CQFW incorporates nine levels in total – Entry level, which is banded into three sub-levels, plus levels 1-8. The diagram below illustrates the different levels with examples of qualifications and learning provision that sit within CQFW. Units on the QALL pillar can sit at any of these levels.

**Credit** is a measure of the learning time assigned to a set of learning outcomes. The learning time is based on the amount of time a typical learner might be expected to take to complete all of the learning relevant to the achievement of the learning outcomes. This could include a range of different methods e.g. taught learning, guided reading, research, research, reflection, 1:1 discussions, work-based activities, assessment etc.

1 credit is assigned 10 hours of learning time.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria are assembled into a ‘’unit’’. Each unit will have a clear title that indicates its content and it will be assigned a credit and level.

**Is there any list or guidance about the kind of things that have already been accredited for social care, early years and childcare?**

Yes, a range of learning has been accredited for social care, early years and child care via the pilot project led by the Care Council, more information about these can be accessed on our website.

**How is quality assured lifelong learning different to the Qualification and Credits Framework (QCF)?**

Units utilised within the QCF diplomas for social care, early years and childcare are the building blocks that are combined by rules of combination into qualifications. As the qualifications are recognised across Wales, Northern Ireland and England, the units within them are UK generic rather than Wales specific. It is also unlikely that niche specialisms would be reflected within the QCF qualifications as there would be no market value for awarding organisations in making units available that would have a low take up across the UK.

The QALL pillar gives us the opportunity to accredit such specialist training as well as learning outside of the main qualifications that can support continuing professional development. It can also be responsive to Welsh Government policy and initiatives. In addition it can be used to accredit broad learning that can then be used as a “passport” across the sector e.g. the moving and handling passport for Wales. In this case where there is duplication across QCF and QALL, learners may receive exemption for specified QCF units within the diploma qualifications.

**How do I decide if quality assured lifelong learning is right for me or my organisation?**

Accrediting your learning on QALL is an important decision and will require effort and investment. However, we believe that this is worthwhile as the benefits are important and far reaching

**Will it be more work for me?**

Yes, initially there will be additional work. You will need to work closely with an awarding organisation to develop units for your learning during the accreditation process, this will mean developing learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the training. However, the benefits should far out way the initial work in producing accredited units. Awarding organisations will provide guidance and support for you to do this

**Our training works fine as it is. What is the point of accrediting it?**

As quality assured lifelong learning is only available in Wales there are particular benefits available to employers and learners. Credit based learning is widely accepted across Wales and can be used to:

* Provide the stepping stones to achievement of formal qualifications – this could either be exemptions for specified learning or in building the confidence of those who may not have been involved in formal learning for some time;
* Facilitate transfer to formal learning e.g. vocational or academic qualifications;
* Facilitate the accreditation of learning that has a specific Welsh perspective or is responding to Welsh policy drivers;
* Accredit ‘’niche’’ or specialist training – some of this may not have been accredited as part of the wider qualifications as there may be little take up or demand for it due to its’ specialism, QALL provides an opportunity to formally recognise this;
* Provide value and recognition of learning undertaken by the workforce;
* Provide status to roles within the sector and specialist learning that may have been undertaken – in fact, an element of professionalisation;
* Aid continuing professional development – this is of particular importance for those workers who need to provide evidence of CPD for registration purposes, it also contributes to good quality service provision;
* Aid recruitment and retention – formal achievement of learning can be a motivating factor for the workforce and good opportunities for learning and development can often be the deciding factor when choosing which employer one should work for;
* Provide evidence to regulators and commissioners of services of quality assured learning undertaken at a particular level by the workforce; and
* Contribute to improvements in the quality of services and service outcomes.

**How much will it cost me?**

Awarding organisations make varying charges for their services and it is worth checking these out before committing to work with a particular one. Some will make charges to support the development of units, some will charge for you to become a recognised centre, some charge for registration and certification of learners and others charge for certification only.

You may wish to partner with an existing recognised centre such as an FE college or employer based centre to reduce costs.

The Care Council does not currently make a charge for endorsement of units for QALL.

**Can I deliver accredited training to other agencies / organisations?**

Yes, as long as this has not been restricted as a condition of the endorsement of the units by the Care Council.

**How do I decide which learning might be appropriate for accreditation on the QALL pillar?**

The focus of the QALL is on the accreditation of learning that is not part of formal qualifications. Examples of learning accredited to date for social care, early years and childcare can be found on the Care Council website.

There are a number of key principles that underpin the use of units on the QALL pillar of CQFW:

* Units must not duplicate existing provision on the QALL pillar of CQFW
* Units must not duplicate existing provision on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) unless a specific request to do so has been made by the Care Council – in this case the Care Council will seek exemption for specified QCF units within qualifications
* Units should reflect either:
* Welsh Government priorities
* Sector priorities
* Specialist or niche learning
* National Occupational Standards where these exist for the subject area

**Is accreditation just for social care, early years and child care?**

No, but the Care Council only has the remit for these parts of the sector. The QALL pillar houses a wide range of learning, sometimes learning will span different sectors or professions, an example of this is a unit that has been accredited via the Care Council for management of suicide prevention. The training for this is delivered to a variety of people including front-line workers, professionals such as doctors etc. and community members.

**How can completion of accredited learning help towards a qualification?**

Accredited training on QALL may cover all or part of a unit within the QCF qualifications. An example of this would be the ‘moving and handling passport’ as the units on QALL for this learning more than cover those within the QCF health and social care diplomas, so in this instance, if learners have completed the passport, they could claim exemption for the units in the qualifications. Another example is where knowledge only learning is accredited for a specific practice area e.g. end of life care – this may then be cross referenced against competence units for the same subject area within the QCF qualifications. Awarding organisations are able to provide advice about this.

**Can I develop a whole qualification for my staff using accredited learning?**

No. The purpose of the QALL is to provide opportunities to accredit learning that sits outside of the main qualifications.

**What can people do with the credits they accumulate?**

Credits demonstrate achievement at a certain level that can be used to aid portability across the sector. They can also be used to demonstrate CPD that can be used as evidence of post registration training and learning for registration with the Care Council. Credits may also be used to access further learning or qualifications.

**Finding out about the role of awarding organisations?**

**What are Awarding Organisations?**

Awarding Organisations (AOs) are recognised bodies who can assign and award credit on CQFW

Awarding organisations will have quality assurance processes that ensure that assessment of learners is fair, consistent and reliable. Awarding organisations are also responsible for making sure that any units that they upload onto CQFW meet the regulatory requirements..

In relation to the endorsement by the Care Council of QALL units for social care, early years and childcare, awarding organisations are responsible for the following:

* Ensuring that the units do not duplicate existing provision on the QALL pillar of CQFW or units on QCF.
* The development of units with partner agencies.
* Ensuring that appropriate assessment instruments are devised with partner agencies.
* Submitting units to the Care Council within agreed timelines.
* Advising the partner agency of the outcome following consideration by the Care Council.
* Submitting units to the CQFW via the Recognition and Approvals Panel.
* Alerting the partner agency and the Care Council to any issues raised about the quality or content of endorsed units.

**Can I accredit units without an awarding organisation?**

Only awarding organisations or recognised bodies can formally submit units for approval to CQFW. Although employers can in theory become recognised bodies the organisational structures and quality assurance processes that are required are likely to be prohibitive, it is therefore more cost effective and efficient to work in partnership with an awarding organisation.

Units for social care, early years and childcare that have **not** been endorsed by the Care Council will **not** be accepted onto the CQFW for accreditation by the Recognition and Approvals Panel.

**Do I need to be able to write units?**

No, you would work in partnership with an awarding organisation who would help you do this. You would provide the expertise in the relevant subject or sector area and the awarding organisation would provide expertise in designing and developing units fit for accreditation. This would include technical support in assigning a credit and level to the unit.

 **Can I choose which awarding organisation to work with?**

Yes, as long as the awarding organisation is a recognised or regulated body with CQFW. To check this contact the CQFW secretariat cqfwenquiries@wales.gsi.gov.uk

**I already work with an awarding organisation. Can I carry on working with them for quality assured lifelong learning?**

Yes, as long as the awarding organisation is a recognised or regulated body with CQFW. To check this contact the CQFW secretariat cqfwenquiries@wales.gsi.gov.uk

**I have my own assessment centre, registered with an awarding organisation. Can I work with them?**

Yes, as long as the awarding organisation is a recognised or regulated body with CQFW. To check this contact the CQFW secretariat cqfwenquiries@wales.gsi.gov.uk

**Will anybody be able to use the units I have developed without asking me? Who owns the units?**

Units can have different ownership status. Some units can only be used by the awarding organisation/s who submit them to the databank. The units may also have specified assessment requirements that limit their use. An example of this can be found on the units that were developed for the Integrated Family Support Service (IFSS) project where it specifies that the unit can only be assessed by practitioners approved by the Welsh Assembly Government Integrated Family Support Implementation team. A link to these units can be found on our website. If units do not have assessment requirements that limit their use, others can use them as long as they have an assessment centre with awarding organisation that owns them.

**Can I use something that has already been accredited by someone else?**

Yes, providing the units are “shared” units and there are no specific assessment requirements that would prevent you doing so.

**How long does accreditation last?**

The unit will be allocated a date from which it is available for use by learners and an expiry date, this will normally be between 2 and 5 years.. Prior to the expiry date the unit will be reviewed by awarding organisations to ensure it is still current and still needed.

Regulators can require units to be reviewed or withdrawn from the databank if they fail to meet the regulatory requirements for CQFW.

**Finding out about the role of the Care Council**

The Care Council for Wales was established in October 2001 to promote high standards of conduct and practice among social care workers and high standards in their training. The Care Council is responsible for endorsing the submission for accreditation of units for quality assured lifelong learning in social care, early years and childcare. As mentioned earlier in this FAQ, the Care Council has led on a pilot project exploring the use of accreditation on QALL for social care, early years and childcare.

**What is the role of the Care Council in the QALL process?**

The Care Council plays an important role in ‘gate-keeping’ the learning that is accredited for social care, early years and childcare. The Care Council as the Sector Skills Council has a role in ensuring that learning that is accredited aligns to sector priorities.

The Care Council is responsible for endorsing the submission for accreditation of units for quality assured lifelong learning in social care, early years and childcare and will make decisions about submitted business cases for unit development and the endorsement of the final units.

For further information about the process to follow to accredit learning please download a copy of our guide.

**In the guide it mentions that units should reflect National Occupational Standards where these exist for the subject are, what are National Occupational Standards and where can I find them?**

National Occupational Standards (NOS) describe best practice by bringing together skills, knowledge and values. NOS are a valuable tool to be used as benchmarks for qualifications and learning as well as defining roles at work, staff recruitment, supervision and appraisal.

The NOS that sit with the Care Council footprint are:

Health and Social Care

Children’s Care Learning and Development

Commissioning, Procurement and Contracting

Leadership and Management for Care Services

Sensory Services

These suites of NOS can be downloaded from our website:

<http://www.ccwales.org.uk/qualifications-and-careers/nos>

**Is the Care Council working jointly with any other bodies?**

We have an agreement with National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Health (NLIAH) about joint working. The Care Council has a seat on the NLIAH accreditation panel and NLIAH has been actively engaged in the work of the Care Council in this area (both Steering and Technical Groups).

**How does all this link to registering with the Care Council?**

Accreditation of lifelong learning allows for the expansion of opportunities to explore continuous professional development (cpd). This fits in with the Care Council’s post registration training and learning (PRTL) requirement for re–registration of certain staff groups- currently social workers, social work students, adult care home managers and residential child care managers and workers. For these individuals to be kept on the register they have to show the Care Council evidence that over a three year period they have kept up to date and maintained or developed their knowledge and skills, accredited learning is the perfect vehicle for this.

**Other useful information**

**Where can I get more information to help me to decide whether to proceed?**

You can access a comprehensive guide on our website or contact us 02920 780654.

1. Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales: Delivering the Promise. Implementation Plan and Handbook 2009-2014. <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/090619handbook20092014en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. An accredited unit by Integrated Family Support Service. Building Stronger Families by Promoting Behavioural Change. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)